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## **PRESS CLIPPINGS**

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### **INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

**(Education)**

Inquirer Mindanao

#### **US-led English program helps Mindanao folk**

By Nash Maulana

**(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer News Online- 3/30/08)**

COTABATO CITY, Philippines—Like their forebears, Muslim and Christian children in Mindanao are learning English grammar direct from the Americans, who introduced the language in the land more than a century ago.

Members of United States Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV) are mentoring English teachers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and in Central Mindanao. The PCV is part of the visiting forces of the Joint Philippine-US Military Exercises.

ARMM Education Secretary Udtog Kawit said the mentoring project of a US-funded education program has been triggered by reports of low-proficiency in English among ARMM teachers and purported failure in some learning packages for Mindanao schoolchildren.

Obscene

The “failure,” Kawit said, includes some foreign loan-funded book programs resulting in printing of learning materials containing grammatical errors and terms deemed obscene.

On Feb. 14, officials of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) revisited pilot areas in Flauta Elementary School, Bagumba ES,

Malamonte ES, Central Bulanan ES and Sambulawan ES—all in Midsayap, North Cotabato.

An education-based program funded by the USAID, Equals (Education Quality Access to Learning and Livelihood Skills) said the PCV group has conducted two training sessions for some 500 teachers from ARMM, Central Mindanao and Western Mindanao in Cebu City.

#### Early lessons

The mentoring activities, called English Language Camps (ELC), are reminiscent of the early 20th century American education introduced in local schools for natives who learned the English language in more practical ways, said Kawit.

For instance, Abigail Swofford, a PCV member, taught elementary school teachers from Mindanao the English language through comic strip writing, so that beneficiaries “discover a new way of learning a new language.”

Other mentoring methods used are oral reading, writing and development, and library development.

Elzadia Washington, deputy mission director of USAID Philippines, said she was delighted to see schoolchildren able to read in English in a reading camp session with their parents at the Flauta Elementary School

#### US books

Washington's group that included Lisa Chiles, deputy assistant administrator for the USAID Asia and the Near East Bureau, and a representative of USAID Education chief Tom Crehan, also distributed books consisting of some 300 titles to local school and village government officials.